



Canada's First Community-Driven Centre of Excellence for Rural Health

Strategic Plan: 2014 – 2016

Revised and updated at April 15 and August 21, 2015 board meetings

Our Mission and Vision

<p>OUR MISSION:</p> <p><i>To create a centre of excellence in rural health</i></p>
<p>OUR VISION:</p> <p><i>To improve the health and quality of life of rural residents</i></p>

Profile of Gateway

Established as a not-for-profit organization in 2008, Gateway is governed by a dedicated, volunteer Board of Directors. Multi-year, start-up funding for creating a *Centre of Excellence in Rural Health* was provided by the McCall-MacBain Foundation and funding for Gateway administration is provided by the County of Huron. Funding for Gateway's many rural research projects comes from a wide variety of sources.

Research and Education Partners

Gateway has signed Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) and Letters of Intent with the following academic partners:

- Georgian College
- Ontario Agricultural College (OAC), University of Guelph
- School of Pharmacy, University of Waterloo
- Schulich Medicine & Dentistry, Western University

The partnership with the Waterloo School of Pharmacy led to Ontario's first funded Chair of Rural Pharmacy and the recruitment of Dr. Feng Chang.

Other research and education partners include: HealthKick Huron, Lawson Health Research Institute, Southwestern Ontario Medical Education Network (SWOMEN), and McMaster University Michael DeGroote School of Medicine.

Business and Community Partners

McCall MacBain Foundation, Ontario Trillium Foundation, Huron Business Development Corporation, Huron/Perth Poultry Farmers, The Municipality of Huron East, Huron East/Seaforth Community Development Trust, AY McLean Estate, Progressive Turf Equipment Inc., United Communities Credit Union Ltd., and the Seaforth Golf and Country Club.

Research Chairs

As a community-based research institute, Gateway has developed an innovative and unique approach to collaborative research partnerships. Key academic researchers from across Ontario have agreed to voluntarily serve as Gateway 'Research Chairs' for specific rural health issues. Gateway supports these Research Chairs in a variety of ways including: helping to recruit students to support various research projects, promotion of the projects and distribution of research findings and results.

- Dr. Feng Chang – Chair of Rural Pharmacy (funded by the University of Waterloo School of Pharmacy)
- Dr. Wayne Caldwell – Chair of Healthy, Sustainable Rural Communities
- Dr. Paul Gill – Chair of Rural Pain Medicine
- Dr. Craig Hudson – Chair of Rural Mental Health
- Dr. Agnes Kluz – Chair of Rural Seniors Wellness
- Dr. Bev Leipert – Chair of Rural Nursing
- Jay McFarlan – Chair of Rural Nutrition
- Dr. Ken Milne – Chair of Rural Medicine
- Dr. Durhane Wong-Reiger – Chair of Rural Health Coaching

Gateway is continually pursuing other Rural Research Chairs and Research Associates to ensure that all the determinants of health for rural communities can be addressed.

The Communities We Serve

Huron, Perth, Grey and Bruce Counties are experiencing significantly higher rates of heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, diabetes, obesity, some forms of cancer, chronic lung disease, depression and mild cognitive impairment compared to urban areas in southwestern Ontario and provincial/national averages. For example, the rate of diabetes in Grey-Bruce (8.0%) is twice the rate of diabetes in London (4.0%) as well as the provincial average of (4.1%). The percentage of obese adults in Huron County is 23%, much higher than the national average of 15%. The mortality rate from ischemic heart disease in Perth County is 19% higher than the national average. Overall population growth in our rural 4-county area has been slow or stagnant but like many rural areas, the counties are aging rapidly. According to the 2011 Census, 1 in 5 residents in Grey Bruce Huron Perth is now over the age of 65 years. While the initial research focus for Gateway has been on this 4-county area in southwestern Ontario, the work of Gateway has potential benefits for all rural communities in Ontario and Canada.

Previous Strategic Directions, 2012 – 2013

The following strategic directions and goals have guided our work over the past year:

<i>Strategic Directions</i>	<i>Strategic Goals</i>
Sustainable Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop Facility Plans for Gateway's <i>Future Home</i>• Develop MOUs with our Academic Research Partners• Pursue New Funding Opportunities• Provide Rural 'Training Ground' for Students
Organization Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase our Management Capacity• Strengthen Board Role through Policy Governance• Determine Partnership Arrangement with Healthkick Huron
Innovative Rural Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop MOUs with our Academic Partners• Encourage/Support Participatory Research in our Rural Communities• Use IT to Create Stronger On-Line Organization
Communications and Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Manage Transition from Scientific Director to Research Chair Model• Market our Value Proposition to Funders, Researchers and Rural Citizens

Developing Our Revised Strategic Plan

A revised strategic plan was initially developed through a facilitated planning session held November 8, 2013 with board members and staff. Based on Executive review of proposed changes, the revised plan was released in early 2014. Although Gateway's long term vision remains unchanged, funding challenges have necessitated a shorter term focus so the revised plan was developed with an 18-24 month time horizon (Fall 2013 – Spring 2015). Our 4 strategic 'pillars' are listed below.

Sustainable Resources	Strategic Partnerships	Innovative Rural Research	Communications & Marketing
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ongoing Implementation of a Comprehensive Fund Development Strategy• Pursuit of Social Enterprise Opportunities• Maximize Volunteer Contributions from Board Members, Research Chairs and Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Confirm Mutually Beneficial Deliverables through the MOUs with our Academic Partners• Pursue Mutually Beneficial Collaboration Agreements with Interested Local Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Encourage/Support Research in our Rural Communities• Strengthen Mutually Beneficial Relationships with all our Research Chairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure Consistent Branding of Gateway• Create a Stronger On-Line Presence• Increase Community Involvements

Longer Term Vision and Goals

KEY ELEMENTS OF OUR LONGER TERM VISION:

- **Healthier rural residents actively contributing to healthy local economy and requiring less health care over time**
- **World class rural research & teaching facilities that attract a wide range of health care professionals to practice in rural areas**
- **Creating a rural model for Canada that successfully links health research, teaching and evidence-based practice through innovation**

In pursuit of our longer term vision, Gateway has established the following multi-year goals:

- Conduct much needed research on under recognized rural health issues through our team of Rural Research Chairs and student research placements/internships.
- Ensure knowledge is successfully transferred back to the communities we serve by hosting local educational events and participating in rural health forums and conferences.
- Expand our partnerships with current and potential collaborators by developing mutually beneficial deliverables through the MOU agreements with our academic partners and facilitating new collaboration agreements with interested other health and corporate partners.
- Attract new 'rural health' businesses and help create a new health-based, knowledge economy as part of the County of Huron's economic development strategy.
- Implement a diversified sustainability plan and fund development strategy which will include the exploration of social enterprise, research grants, foundation requests, individual donors, corporate sponsors and government contributions.

Short-Term Action Plans

These short-term objectives and actions were originally developed at Gateway’s April 15, 2015 board meeting and revised at our August 21, 2015 board meeting. Sustainable operating resources for Gateway remains our top priority.

Strategic Direction #1 – Sustainable Resources

<i>Key Actions</i>	<i>Lead Person(s)</i>
Refine fund development strategy to focus on key short-term initiatives based on an updated business plan	Fundraising committee – Gwen, Dan, Agnes
Continue to pursue Health Coaching as a social enterprise strategy (Innoweave project)	Sheila
Continue to pursue development of healthy food product in collaboration with Everspring	Dan
Explore social innovation as model for Gateway	Sheila
Link Gateway activities to the County’s economic development strategy	Dan

Strategic Direction #2 – Strategic Partnerships

<i>Key Actions</i>	<i>Lead Person(s)</i>
Follow-up to MOU signed with AMGH	Sheila
Collaborate with Rural Ontario Institute on a rural health forum to showcase Gateway research	Jim, Gwen
Continue to explore partnership opportunities with Engage Huron	Dan, Gwen
Explore partnership opportunities with Public Health	Gwen, Jay
Continue to explore partnership opportunities with Western (incl. South West Academic Health Network and new Masters of Public Health Program)	Sheila, Feng, Dan

Strategic Direction #3 – Innovative Rural Research

Key Actions	Lead Person(s)
Continue to facilitate student placements to support Research Chairs	Gwen (in collaboration with Research Chairs)
Develop more virtual project connectivity – updates on “who’s doing what”	Jay
Pursue more publications in rural peer-reviewed journals (e.g. Society of Rural Physicians)	Research Chairs
Pursue a new Research Chair in Rural Health Economics	Dan

Strategic Direction #4 – Communications & Marketing

Key Actions	Lead Person(s)
Further develop Gateway’s communications strategy with a stronger online presence	Jay
Produce quarterly Gateway newsletter	Gwen
Social media training for Gateway board members leading to recommended social media protocols	Jay, Agnes



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